

Brief History of Vermont's Workforce Development Council

(and the strategic link between workforce development and economic development)

November 1991 the House Commerce Committee issued a report: Toward Sustainable Economic Development_The report recommended that the diverse and uncoordinated workforce training programs in Vermont be “restructured into a coherent and effective statewide system.”

February 1992 - Governor Dean and a joint legislative committee established the Task Force on Workforce Education and Training. The goal of the Task Force was to make recommendations designed to improve Vermont’s workforce education and training system.

November 1992- The Task Force on Workforce Education and Training issued its report. A key recommendation was to establish a Workforce Development Council (WDC), whose charge would be to develop and oversee a comprehensive system for workforce education and training.

March 1993- Governor Dean signed an executive order establishing the Council, and in May both houses of the legislature finalized the Economic Progress Act. The Act, which recognized the WDC as an executive branch council, was signed by the Governor in June 1993?.*

December 1994-The WDC issued its report, Advancing Vermont's Workforce_that defined the vision, mission and goals for development of an integrated network of workforce education and training.

April 1995 - The Legislature enacted Act 45 to confirm the WDC as the state's workforce education and training council and authorized it to establish up to twelve regional Workforce Investment Boards.

August 1997-The final Workforce Investment Boards are recognized by the WDC. These volunteer regional boards are charged to begin the task of improving the regional delivery of workforce education and training services, and linking those services to regional economic development strategies. Also in 1998, the Council receives its first general fund appropriation.

April 1998 - The WDC adopted a comprehensive business plan that builds on the 1994 Report, and defined specific actions and tasks necessary to establish an effective statewide system of workforce education and training. Also in 1998, Congress enacted the Workforce Investment Act that calls for the creation of a State Workforce Investment Board to oversee a number of federally funded education and training programs.

February 1999 – The Connecticut River Valley WIB completes the state's first Regional Workforce Development Plan that identifies strategic industries for the region, and makes specific recommendations for the development of a high skill workforce to support those industries, with the goal of creating good jobs for Vermonters, and a competitive advantage for Vermont businesses.

In simple terms, the charge to the Economic Progress Council is to create jobs in growth and emerging industries and the charge to the WDC is to create the high skilled workforce to fill those jobs. This builds on the notion that the State's most important resource is its workers. Fundamentally, both Councils endeavor to “build a diverse and sustainable economy, and to increase the well-being of Vermonters and their communities....” The Governor and the General Assembly have established these councils as the cornerstone of Vermont's economic development strategy.

*Concurrent with the establishment of a Workforce Development Council, the 1992 Task Force

called for the development of a “comprehensive economic development plan for Vermont. The Economic Progress Act also established the Vermont Partnership for Economic Progress and its successor, the Economic Progress Council.

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